



Road Trip



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Chapter 1 by Brooklyn Bryce

She watches as the road stretches out before us and I try to keep my eyes off of her, of her slender body strapped down by the seat belt. Then doubt seeps into my mind like venom, and all of a sudden I'm questioning why she's in a car with the likes of me on a Monday night.

"Hey."

She smiles, "Hey yourself."

"Don't you have to get back home? Aren't your parents gonna freak?"

She cringes but reduces it to a shrug. Her eyes travel back to the deserted land filled with cacti and rolling tumbleweeds. We are in the middle of nowhere as the sunsets with a twenty four pack of water in the backseat.

"Who cares? Can't we just enjoy right now? You always complain about how we never spend time together but now you want to talk about my parents?" She snorts, but I can tell something's wrong. We spend too much time together for me not to know by now that when

she avoids a conversation she does something weird like snorts & giggles.

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"Caren"

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She reaches over, pulls me closer to her and I don't even mind the road now. I'm just staring at her, with her smooth sun kissed tan skin. The reluctant brown eyes, the plump pink lips smothered in lip gloss she'd found after forcing me to go along with her. I stayed behind her in the beauty supply that day, hands tucked deep into my favorite hoodie, headphones on blast as I avoided the stares of the girls at the cash register.

I pull away just as our lips are inches apart. "Whoa. Got a deathwish?"

She slumps her shoulders and body and crosses her hands over her chest. "Just..."

"Caren." I say cautiously.

"Shut up."

"If you don't tell me what's going on I'll turn around and call your parents." I threaten holding back a smile, At times you have to let her know you're serious or she'll run you over like a tractor.

"They don't care." She says in a low voice. "I told them already and they kicked me out. I was in the process of packing my things but knowing them they'd call the police and say I stole the clothes they bought me just to see me suffer in jail or in the system."

I am silent this time around. I regret not kissing her, she could use it. She adjusts her body so she's facing the door with her back to me. Legs propped in the seat as she sleeps. I turn the A/C up a notch and let the soft murmur of the music intensify this silence. I'm afraid if I turn it up she'll think I don't care, that I wasn't listening. But I don't know what to say. I was never good at this.

"You know what?"

"What?" I say the first chance I get to respond.

"When we have kids, I'm going to let them love whoever they want."

I grin. "That was originally the plan."

"So all this getting out of the car was just to hear you say that?"

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"Only if you want to."

"It'd be my honor Ava McKinley."

I turn my head back and move in for a kiss. And when our lips touch the world feels good for once.

Chapter 2 by Ollie Toast



She found herself forgetting how to breathe

Caren eventually fell asleep, her dirty blonde hair tossed over the seat arm and the pillow she was laying on. I mindlessly looked out on the road, staring ahead blankly. I put my right hand on her head, running my fingers gently through her hair and rubbed her forehead. She mumbled in her sleep and I stopped.

I changed the radio to the rock 'n' roll station. I played it softly so it wouldn't wake up Caren, but I began to drum my fingers on the steering wheel to the beat.

Hours passed, and I had glanced at the gas meter one to many time. Caren was still asleep, and we were pretty much running on fumes. There were no buildings in sight, and I was beginning to panic a little.

"Caren, wake up, dear." I shook her slightly, and she woke up straight away. It was almost concerning how quickly she sat up.

"What is it?" Caren asked, rubbing her eyes.

"We're running low on gas. Could you look up how far the nearest gas station is?" I asked her. She nodded, pulling out her phone.

A few minutes later, "There's no goddamn service."

I sighed, stopping the car against the side of the road. I put my head on the steering wheel.

This was going great.

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